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THE CONSTABLE BARKED HIS REPLY

LONG BINH (18th MP BDE) -- The PMO receives a call about a fight, and two jeep-loads of MPs are dispatched to the scene. They arrive to find a crowd agitated to riotous proportions, but are unable to wedge their way through it to quell the disturbance.

Suddenly, a dog's bark is heard above the din of the crowd, and they turn to find 75 pounds of German Shepherd straining at the end of his master-handler, Private First Class Stuart Robertson of the 212th Military Police Company (Sentry Dog). The mere presence of the dog, Dingo, is enough deterrent to quiet the commotion.

"Many people don't want the MPs or police to use dogs because they're afraid of them," explained Robertson, "but that respect is what makes a patrol dog as effective as he is. A criminal will turn and fight an MP, but he'll give up to a dog every time."

Dingo is one of the patrol dogs now being used in Vietnam by the Army. He and another dog were sent to Vietnam to take part in an evaluation of "command motivated" dogs, or patrol dogs. Unlike sentry dogs, Dingo will only attack on Robertson's command. He can be safely used around crowds without fear that he will attack without reason.

Demonstrating the control a patrol dog's master has over his animal, PFC Robertson pointed to a man and said "friend". The man went over to Dingo and on Robertson's command "give him five," shook hands with the dog, who politely offered a paw.

The demonstrator then moved back out of leash range of Dingo, as the patrol dog handler gave the command "watch him." Suddenly Dingo's ears pricked up and his body tensed. A sudden move by the demonstrator shot Dingo out like a bullet to the end of his leash, teeth bared and ready to pin down the demonstrator. Robertson gave another command followed by "friend" again, and Dingo relaxed and returned to his master. On the command "give him five" he again shook hands with the same man he had just been alerted on.

Robertson explained yet another difference between sentry dogs, which cannot be used for regular police work, and patrol dogs, which are able to do such work. "A sentry dog will attack a man and do as much damage to him as it can. Some will even bite hard enough to crush bones. A patrol dog, however, will only use enough force to pin and hold the man he is after. Although the patrol dog has the ability to be as fierce as his sentry dog counterpart if necessary, he can also hold a man's arm so lightly as to not leave teeth marks. The amount of force the dog uses depends solely upon the individual being apprehended.